

MARYLAND • PENNSYLVANIA • WEST VIRGINIA



Herald-Mail.com

July 11, 2008

Maynard has the right stuff

Maryland Public Safety Secretary Gary Maynard visited Washington County again this week, and his visit was a reminder of how frequently he's come to Washington County since his appointment by Gov. Martin O'Malley.

Maynard spoke to the Hagerstown-Washington County Chamber of Commerce about the \$200 million economic impact the three state prisons here have on the local economy.

His talk was not about what he's done since being appointed in January 2007, but the prisons' effect on the local economy. The 1,700 employees here ought to appreciate Maynard, because since his appointment, he's done things that those who came before him found impossible:

He supervised the closing of the antiquated House of Correction in Jessup, Md., after a correctional officer targeted for his enforcement of prison rules was stabbed to death.

He changed the prisoner-release policy that had allowed inmates who lived in Baltimore and who were convicted there to be released in Hagerstown.

After years of wrangling over whether ex-offenders could legally be sent back to their home areas, Maynard said the policy made no sense and changed it.

Just as important, he hasn't ducked any of the tough questions. For example, when asked how the repeal of the death penalty would affect correctional officers' safety, Maynard said there are other ways to control inmate behavior, even if those prisoners are lifers with no chance of parole.

Maynard acted quickly when some correctional officers were accused of brutality, serving notice that abuse of inmates would not be tolerated.

This week, Maynard also spoke again about his pledge to use inmate labor to help local governments with clean-ups and other big projects.

Joe Kroboth, the county's public works director, said the county does use state inmate labor for roadside clean-up, utilizing four crews of four to six inmates apiece on a daily basis for roadside maintenance, washing vehicles and grounds maintenance.

But Maynard is offering to do an even bigger project and county government ought to take him up on it.

Taxpayers now spend more than \$20,000 annually to incarcerate each inmate. Isn't it time they got a little better return on their money?

Maynard seems sensitive to the need to return some of that money to us in the form of inmate labor.

As public safety secretary, Maynard., seems to have taken a special interest in the prisons here. That's good for the employees, inmates and citizens of Washington County.

We salute him for a job well done, and hope he keeps up the good work.